

ARNOLD ARBORETUM  
HARVARD UNIVERSITY

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BULLETIN  
OF  
POPULAR INFORMATION

JAMAICA PLAIN, MASS.

MAY 6, 1924

On the 1st of April spring in the Arboretum was probably ten days or two weeks earlier than usual, but owing to much cold and rainy weather flowers now look as if they might be as late when fully open as they were early a month ago. The Missouri and eastern Asiatic Witch Hazels blooming in January and February are the earliest plants to flower in the Arboretum; these are shrubs or shrub-like trees, and the earliest of the large trees which shows its flowers in this climate is the Silver or Soft Maple, *Acer saccharinum*, which blooms here by the first or middle of March and has nearly ripened its seeds before the leaves are half grown. It is interesting that the seeds of this tree fall as soon as ripe and germinating at once produce plants with several pairs of leaves before the end of summer. This is a large, fast-growing tree, widely distributed from New Brunswick to Louisiana, and to Nebraska and Missouri, reaching often the height of one hundred and twenty feet, with a trunk three feet in diameter and a drooping head of wide-spreading branches. Very common on the sandy banks of streams and less common in deeply submerged swamps, it is less abundant near the Atlantic coast and at high altitudes on the Appalachian Mountains. This tree is so easily transplanted and grows so rapidly that it has been largely used in the United States as a street and roadside tree, but the brittle branches which break easily detract from its value for such purposes; and the wood is less valuable than that of the Sugar or Red Maple. Several forms differing slightly in the shape of the leaves, and one a small shapely shrub, are occasionally cultivated.

Few trees have flowered during April in the Arboretum. The prin-

cipal ones have been the Red Maple, *Acer rubrum*, both with scarlet and with yellow flowers and fruit; *pallidiflorum*, and the common American Elm, *Ulmus americana*. The three Silver Poplars, *Populus alba* and *P. canescens* of Europe and *P. tomentosa* from northern China, one of the handsome and valuable trees introduced by the Arboretum, and the common eastern Cottonwood, *Populus balsamifera*, variety *virginiana*, more generally known perhaps *Populus deltoidea*, have been covered with flowers, as have many species of Willows, including a few rare species like *Salix irrorata*, *S. Laescadiana*, *S. stipularis*, *S. ferruginea* and *S. Siegartii*.

More shrubs than trees have flowered in April. The one with the most conspicuous flowers has been *Magnolia stellata*, of which there are a number of large and small plants in front of the Administration Building. This is an extremely large, round-headed shrub with large dark green leaves which, like those of all the Magnolias which flower before the leaves appear, fall without change of color. This plant rarely ever has produced fruit here, but every autumn it is covered with flower-buds. These are never injured during the winter but the flowers, which are about four inches in diameter, open so early that the numerous loosely arranged petals are usually ruined nine years out of ten by a late frost which turns them brown. This year even when there have only been the slightest frosts in April the petals have suffered somewhat. Very little is known about this plant. By a mistaken determination it was at first called *Burgerea stellata*, and it has also been called by S. B. Parsons *Magnolia Halleana*, the name under which it is still often cultivated in this country where it is not rare. Although this Magnolia was cultivated in Japanese gardens before the days of Von Siebold it has not yet been found as a wild plant in Japan, although Veitch speaks of it in the "Hortus Veitchiana" as a native of Fujiyama. It was introduced into Europe by Veitch in 1862 from a garden in Nagasaki, and the same year it was brought to the United States by Dr. George R. Hall and sold by him to the Parsons Nursery at Flushing, Long Island, where it was largely propagated. Dr. Hall, who before 1862 had never traveled much in Japan, no doubt found the plant in a garden near one of the ports. Nothing is known of it except what has been gathered from these cultivated plants. It is possibly a native of Korea and was early introduced into Japan as a garden plant from that country. It is entirely hardy in Massachusetts and the early opening flower-buds suggest a northern origin. No Magnolia has been found in northern China yet but much of Korea has been only recently explored. It is probable that *Magnolia stellata* will prove hardy further north than any species with flowers opening before the leaves, and that it may be more successful as far north as Montreal or Toronto than it has been in Massachusetts. The Arboretum would be glad to hear of the hardiness of this plant in any part of Canada. The pink-flowered form of *Magnolia stellata*, which probably originated in a Japanese garden, is flowering well in the Arboretum this year.

*Forsythia ovata*, a native of the Diamond Mountains of Korea, and in its range the most northern of all the species of this genus, was introduced by the Arboretum from seeds collected by Wilson in 1918.



A plant of this species flowered slightly last year, but by the middle of April this year was thickly covered with flowers which opened about two weeks earlier than those of *Forsythia Fortunei* or its hybrids. This promises to be an extremely valuable introduction as it will be possible to grow it much further north than any of the other species of the genus, and in this climate the flower-buds will probably never be injured as they often are on the other species, especially those of the hybrid *F. intermedia* of which several forms are in cultivation. These are the result of crossing *Forsythia suspensa* var. *Fortunei* with *F. viridissima* which is the most southern and tender species. As a flowering plant one of these hybrids called *spectabilis*, which originated in Germany, is the handsomest of all Forsythias, but in winter too many of the flower-buds are killed. In the Arboretum *Forsythia Fortunei* can be successfully cultivated but in the north it should be replaced by the Korean species. *F. ovata* is a large shrub with light yellow branches, broad, long-pointed, coarsely toothed leaves from four to five inches in length and from three to four inches in width, and clear primrose colored flowers smaller than those of *F. Fortunei* or any of the forms of its hybrid. This species may prove useful to cross with *F. Fortunei* or the hybrid *intermedia* for the production of a new hardy form for the north.

The most beautiful plants in flower in the Arboretum this week are four single-flowered Cherry-trees on the right hand side of the Forest Hills road a little way below the Forest Hills gate. Two of these are the Spring Cherry of the Japanese, *Prunus subhirtella*, which as it grows in the Arboretum is a large tree-like shrub rather than a tree, and certainly when in flower the most beautiful of all the Cherry-trees or shrubs which have been growing in the Arboretum. It is not known as a wild plant but is not uncommon in the gardens of western Japan, although rarely seen in those of Tokyo. The fact, too, that it does not produce itself from seed is another reason why the Spring Cherry is so rarely seen in the United States and Europe, where it was first introduced by the Arboretum in which it has been growing for thirty years, two small plants having been received in 1894 in pots from the Botanic Garden in Tokyo. As it grows in the Arboretum *P. subhirtella* is a shrub eighteen or twenty feet tall and nearly as broad with pink petals which become white before they fall and which are followed by small black fruit. This fruit when planted produces two varieties of this plant, principally the variety *ascendens*, which is a tall rather slender tree not uncommon in the woods of central Japan, and it is these seedlings which furnish the best stock on which to graft *Prunus subhirtella* itself. Still extremely rare in gardens, *P. subhirtella ascendens* is a good garden plant. Much better known is its variety *pendula*. This is the Japanese Weeping Cherry, which has been largely cultivated now for fifty years in this country, and is common in the neighborhood of Boston and New York. The trees are beautiful when covered with their small pink flowers, but these last only for two or three days. Another variety of *Prunus subhirtella* (var. *autumnalis*) appears to be a plant of considerable promise, especially as it flowers in both spring and autumn. This is a shrub, or in Japan occasionally a small tree, with semi-double pink and white flowers which open in

the spring a day or two later than those of the variety *pendula*. The autumn flowers are rather smaller than those of the spring crop, but opening in October never fail to create interest and curiosity.

The Sargent Cherry so-called, a northern form of *Prunus serrulata* (var. *sachalinensis*) is the handsomest of all Cherry-trees of large size, as *Prunus subhirtella* is the handsomest of the species which are shrubs rather than trees. The large single rose-colored or pink flowers which are opening this week are short lived but very abundant; and the hardiness of the trees, which have not been attacked here yet by disease, the beauty of the large green leaves brilliantly colored in the autumn, and the lustrous bark make this the handsomest of Cherry-trees. In northern Japan the Sargent Cherry was once a common inhabitant of the forest, growing sometimes to a height of eighty feet with a tall massive trunk. Such trees have been sought for the value of the timber they produce and are fast disappearing. This tree was first raised in 1891 in the Arboretum from seeds presented by Dr. William Sturgis Bigelow, of Boston, and his tree, the largest specimen standing in the United States, and probably in Europe, is growing just below those of *Prunus subhirtella*. A taller and narrower tree raised from seeds collected by Prof. Sargent in Japan in 1892, is standing by the Forest Hills Road near its junction with the Meadow Road. Some of the handsomest and hardiest of the double flowered Cherry-trees cultivated by the Japanese, like *albo-rosea* and *fugenzo*, better known in nurseries as "James H. Vietch," seedlings of this species, supply the best stock on which to work most of the double flowered Japanese Cherries, and the reason they have failed here and in Europe is because they have been worked usually on *Prunus avium* which has not proved a successful stock for it. Fortunately several of the Japanese trees in the Arboretum are large enough to produce abundant crops of seeds, and there are a few other plants in eastern Massachusetts which usually ripen their seed every year. Nurserymen who wish to supply the demand for double flowered Japanese Cherry-trees can obtain the seed from these trees, and stock of all the best varieties can be obtained from the trees which were sent several years ago from the Arboretum to the Park Department of Rochester, to be grown for this purpose. There is no reason therefore why thousands of the best forms of these double-flowered Cherry-trees, hardy, on permanent stock, should not be procurable in a few years in this country. As the seeds from the Arboretum have now been distributed in this country for several years to a number of nurserymen and others, there are probably already a number of plants here large enough for stock.

*Prunus incisa*, the fourth of the early flowering Japanese Cherries, is again in flowers. It is still a small treelike shrub, differing from *Prunus subhirtella* and *P. serrulata* in its deeply lobed leaves and pure white petals. These last only a few days, but the calyx, which gradually turns red remains on the fruit two or three weeks and is distinctly conspicuous. Although a common plant in Japan on the Hakone Mountains and the slopes of Fuji-san, this tree is still rare in American and European gardens where it has been usually incorrectly named. The oldest plant in the Arboretum, which is growing near *P. subhirtella*, was obtained in 1912 from a German nursery.